

UNENCUMBERED

Autumn 1984

"The calmness of advancing age, would surely allow one's activities to continue to a lesser degree." This thought crossed my mind six months ago. The year previously had witnessed my retirement from continuous active employment, and the necessity to make plans for a long thought of, west coast of Scotland cruise, while still able, was ever present in my mind.

A few days later while enjoying an outing to Edinburgh, Jenny shopped, and with plans made to meet up later. A no. 23 bus from the Mound took me to the botanical gardens. Last night had been frosty and today's combination of sunshine and a bonny breeze was bringing quick changes to the garden's vegetation and their attractive collection of trees. Laddie-like, I shuffled leisurely along on a deep carpet of crisp colourful leaves of yet another year. Every shuffle deftly reproducing a similar resonant contented sigh of a spent wave on a shore of golden shingle. Gliding over the tree tops a pair of contentious gulls cried to one another in Aggravation.

There and then, mental preparations with an acquisitive salty undertone came into being. The little boat that

had given me so much pleasure over the last twelve years while sailing about the Forth Estuary would be my magic carpet. Why not cruise in the true sense of the word? To sail hither and thither about the west coast of Scotland, and survive for a few weeks like an 'Estuary Itinerate'. This could be a cruise without prearranged arrivals or departures. To sail, look around, observe the bird life and enjoy the scenery. The idea of it filled me with an irrepressible sense of delight.

From the fall of the leaf on that very day, until the break of the bud. Plans spurred on with single minded endeavours, this cruise became a reality. To encourage a little order towards the cruise, a pursuit or undertaking would be necessary, for my cruising instinct is to linger rather long in likeable places and the very attraction in the first instance, means near every natural haven visited would work the oracle on me.

Once afloat on the west coast brine famed for its beautiful deep water anchorages, my 'Quest' would be with a view to consider a long standing uncertainty that for years had me wondering. Are there any good shallow natural havens thereabouts, if so where are they? An opportunity now, to experience the pleasure of looking for some of them myself. My already chosen route. Starting from Inverness on the east coast, with an

unhurried passage through the caledonian canal, then more-or-less continue along the same journey much used by passage making yachtsmen.

From Corpach, the gateway to and from the caledonian canal the cruise would take me in the general direction towards Crinan. My estimation of time for this complete cruise, allowing for the rigours and rituals of every day life will be seven weeks.

"KATY WRAN" is the Scottish name for the tiny resident song -bird Jenny Wren. This is also the name of my very small Single-handed sailing boat.

The following is
An informal
introduction to estuary and
shallow water cruising.

BY JIMMY LONGLEY.

FROM THE LOG OF THE "KATY WRAN" A 20'3" G.R.P. KING
SHARK SLOOP.

7th MAY 1985

BESSIE

"Most folk on passage take 3 days. The leisurely minded enjoy the amenities offered, without haste."

The cheery lock-keeper informed me of this while securing the boat's lines aside the sea-lock at Clachnaharry. Handing me some literature later on,

"Have a read at these when you get a chance, they contain all the information regarding your canal journey." Thanking the lock-keeper for his invaluable assistance, he then operated the lock gates and "Katy Wran" was in fresh water, as one set of gates shut and the other set opened. A railway bridge ahead swung clear, "Enjoy yourself old yin," said the cheery one.

Progress to the next lock was made and negotiated, which delivered the small yacht and me onto Muirtown Basin. We were afloat on a tranquil scene of peace and quiet waters, two or three folk fishing from the banks, a duck here and there and not another boat moving. One wanted to breathe deep. The air was cool and clean and held a slight tang of freshly cut oak timber. Chipped with an

adze no doubt. The normal practice of looking after oneself while living aboard so small a vessel takes much time and careful planning. Consequently creating uniformity enough to control idleness. The very thought of the days ahead overwhelmed me with a marvellous sense of peace and detachment. Blessed with a day of sunshine that was already mid afternoon, I joined in with the leisurely minded.

A slight drift of the unpowered boat was taking her towards a grand little berth and in a few minutes we took up temporary tenancy. Gliding over the mast-head a solitary wandering gull chuckled appropriately. An interesting evening followed also a comfortable night, where sleep was sound aboard the "Katy Wran". I heard not a rattle nor a ripple nor a rat-tat-tat and met the morning just after sun-up, the cabin temperature 42°F. With breakfast over and free to proceed the sun was four hrs higher in the heaven when, with the boat full of everyday needs, and warmly covered in Highland sunshine, continued on its 106 ft climb towards the west.

The Caledonian Canal is 60 miles in length, from Clachnaharry on the east side to Corpach on the west, 21.50 miles are reckoned to be canal cuttings, with 38.50 miles of natural and beautiful fresh water Lochs,

Dochfour, Ness, Oich and Lochy, Loch Oich (at 106 ft above sea level) is the highest point. Clearing this flight of four locks, raised the boat up to a different water height of about thirty ft. The lock-keeper was a gem of a man and with tireless help, liberated us without a scratch.

With thanks and a wave to one another. The passage began we set off to voyage along 5 miles of man made canal cuttings. Taking an intense delight in visible things, I soon noticed how still the water was, the sun heating the surface appeared to have produced a skin, for there were many different types of fly upon it. Swallows swooping low over the water were no doubt shortening their numbers. Spring flowers were abloom on the banks, carpets of primrose, clumps of daffodil, tussocks of violets and dainty speedwell. A Mavis sung high up on an Ash tree in flower but, without leaf yet, its merry chorus was heard above the outboard's roar. Warblers, Finches and Buntings frantic with ornithological revelling, all added colour and beauty to this lovely spring day. A large sign on the bank when nearing a bridge said WHISTLE, one blast on the boat's Boy Scout's tin whistle was enough, the bridge (carries the A82) swung open with poetic proficiency without me reducing speed.

William MacLean Esq. of Doughgarroch (now spelt Dochgarroch) was one of the Landed Gentry, who in 1811 sold land at this point for canal construction, it being thought of as worth little value. Yet whilst securing "Katy Wran" at the small jetty today, after coming through the single lock, to me it was a wonderland with an old world air about it. One could almost picture the horse minders and bargees smoking clay pipes and their trousers tied with nickie-tams or wearing leather gaiters and time to stop for a blether. Several vessels were at rest here with plenty of mooring facilities. Opposite the jetty on the far side, a narrow track wide enough for a motor car, led into a grass covered picnic and leisure area of good proportions, several people were enjoying the day.

With things ship shape on board an hour's shore leave was in keeping with nautical decorum. However unfamiliar surroundings had held me in its grip, far longer than anticipated. Water perhaps would be good here, so off I toddled with a plastic bottle and met Grandad as the bright eyed laddie called him.

"The water here is peat coloured with floating particles in it, but not to worry," he said laughing "You only need half the tea leaves you normally use for a cup of tea."

Grandad looked well on it, so topping up my bottle, while saying "The water might even be 1% proof."

On my return tea was made using the water and no complaint was recorded. Preparing an early evening meal prior to departing, but before eating, I lay back with a couple of cushions, dressed in shorts on the cockpit seats, shut my eyes thinking to myself, what a life, I love it, I love it, when someone spoke.

"Nice weather we are having."

Without opening my eyes agreed that it was indeed and said so, a short pause, and then,

"I suppose you have your Whisky, Porridge and Bagpipes in that little cabin."

Finally pulling myself up to a sitting position. The voice and Australian accent matched the tall lean man that stood dressed in a light shirt and flannels. Bare headed with fine hair greying from his neck up past his ears, his face deeply lined into his leathery looking skin. There was something very open about this stranger, a hustling bravado type! Yet, his features were marked with fruition and fun. Smiling as he looked down from where he stood by the small jetty. Unable to answer his questions for as I thought of a reply he spoke again.

"I am between positions just now." I jested!

"That's a good one" said he, "How did that come about?"

"At the moment having not chosen a horizontal position (for the night's sleep) I am between positions."

"That makes sense, since ye're cruising the canal?"

"I'm enjoying an unhurried cruise to the West Coast of Scotland."

"Is this your first day?"

"No, my second."

"How far is that you have come?"

"5 miles or so," said I.

"You need to do better than that," he said laughing and he laughed louder when explaining to him, my apparent lack of speed suits the surroundings.

"One must not dash around and upset the harmony of the Highlands."

"You're an old dingo of a dog, how long is it going to take you?"

"Well, once clear of the canal, to cruise for five weeks, about the islands on the west."

"You lucky sod. What about your good lady, is she with you?"

"No, but I wish she was. We keep in touch with the phone."

"Will you sleep aboard the "Katy Wran" every night?"

"I shall and will love it."

"On your own and not even a furry friend for company, well-well-well."

Although I should be on my way, but sat still, somehow perceiving my friend here wished to converse further.

"That's my wife sitting in the caravanette over there. Bessie and I", he went on, "left Perth in Australia in March for a holiday, hiring a caravanette in each country we visit, but she feels so cold in Scotland. With the better weather today it does not entice her out of the van, she feels warmer behind glass, she's not enjoying the holiday one bit."

"Would you think maybe you started your Scottish visit too early in the year, it's only early May now?" I asked him. "Have you heard of the Scottish travelling people of yester-year, or tinkers as some folk called them. Mist people is what they prefer to be called, they would wait until the yellow flower had shown itself on the broom, unlike the gorse in its flowering habits which flowers in February onwards. But it was the broom flowering that set the Mist people wandering away from their winter quarters, travelling and sleeping under canvas and generally heralding the start of the summer for them. They would tell us both we are out and about too early, for there's no yellow on the broom yet."

The tall Australian said his biggest worry was, "Apart from Bessie feeling cold, she just does not seem to be enjoying the holiday, after us planning it for so many years. We left home in March and *DID* America, then we

DID England and now we are *DOING* Scotland, but she is not enjoying it, I could *DO* her," he said, "Heaven only knows what's going to happen when we have *DONE* Scotland and go on to *DO* Switzerland. By the way I'm Pete." He announced.

Nothing astonishes men so much as common sense and plain dealing, with this in mind, I asked the Australian if I might make a suggestion.

"Forget your stay here tonight, your wife suffers from Caravanette Lag. She feels weary, cold and a little frightened. The key to recovery is simple. Here's the panacea. When we finish talking, drive off in a casual manner and head for a comfortable and warm hotel in Inverness, book in for at least two days. Park your vehicle and forget it. Have your wife believe it's your own idea. Make sure she keeps warm, hot showers and baths, encourage her to a state of near torpor, pamper her and treat her with kindness and consideration and see she drinks at least half a bottle of wine with every evening meal, then kiss her and tell her you love her."

I thought his mahogany coloured face was not pliable enough without moisture to take the changing shape that came over it. Mirth abounded. As he laughed, he took a white handkerchief from his pocket to dry the tears that

came to his eyes, lost his equilibrium and fell, but recovered.

"You old devil of a Pom that you are."

"You'd better sit for a while," I said,

"Not at all," said he still laughing. "I'm off to find that hotel."

As they departed slowly moving near to the boat

"Best of luck with your horizontal positions and God Bless your Baggy Wrinkles", were his final words, Bessie sported a smile and a wave.

"Thanks, good luck," I replied. Their hooter sounded as the caravanette disappeared up the wee track.

Not until afternoon on the next day while "Katy Wran" and I were being baptised in gentle Highland drizzle did we finally depart from the little haven of Dochgarroch, that had, after all, become a horizontal position. Birdwatching, coupled with preparation for everyday life held me here in a pleasant and enjoyable way. Departure had its difficulties. This morning while eating breakfast. Spellbound to the whines of a small bird that held my eyes transfixed to the clear perspex window. The brown bird loved the waters edge where it fed incessantly, this turned out to be one of my sightings with an undetermined name, plus, no picture or mention of it within the pages of the boat's bird spotting book,

suddenly the bird disappeared into a small hole in the canal bank!

This became a sign for me to retreat, water needed heating to wash the dishes. Alas, it was not to be. The gas flint igniter refused to spark! The gadget had to be replaced. Remembering my two post cards that were ready to send. I strolled along to the village shop - Post Office, expecting to see the same woman that served me yesterday but instead it was the shop owner, a heavy built cheery man. Good mornings were exchanged, and the story of the gas ignition failure was revealed.

"What would you have in the way of a gas ignition, that you could sell me?"

"Only matches." he replied.

"Would you like safety or Swan Vestas?" he continued.

"Give me three boxes of Swan Vestas." said I. Handing the matches over the counter, he smiled.

"You are off a boat sir, but you are not a fisherman? We have fishermen coming in here from time to time, they change their fishing grounds you know from east to west at certain times of the year and then again west to east. If it's matches they are after they never take Swan Vestas, always safety matches."

We spoke of the superstitions that were a way of life with fishing folk, certain words like swan, pig, or pork, along with many other words were taboo. They would never take an orange aboard their fishing boats at one time, but traditions are changing quickly these days. Whether these things still go on we did not know.

"Superstitions die hard." he said.

He went on to tell me of the sailing he had enjoyed on the west coast of Scotland, and mentioned many places that I hoped to visit myself.

"Where can I post my cards?" I asked.

"Pop them in the wee bag there." he told me.

The wee bag was the biggest post bag imaginable. It was held in position by some supporting frame fully upright and completely open at the top to show the full 2'6'' at least across the bag. My two cards were dropped into the huge gaping hole, and heard them hit the bottom after disappearing into the blackness of the canvass 3'6'' below. This tickled me and brought a smile to my lips while saying cheerio to the shop keeper. He knew what had amused me. He wished me "Cheerio" and with a broad wink he said,

"I delivers the mail at Christmas time as well."

Come to think of it he did look like Santa Clause too.

With a pulse of purpose in the air; at last the boat headed westward. The young laddie on holiday with his Grandad saw us leaving and came running along the tow path like a whippet, when he drew level he told me how he loved seeing all the boats coming and going.

"Grandad's just getting our boat ready," he said, "We might catch you up." He stopped at the grass bank and waved.

Rock Pipits, Wagtails and Siskins graced the way along to where the waters gradually outspread fan-like into Loch Dochfour. A few tempting anchorages here, but, run slowly on under working sail, then passing the tiny Darroch Islands to port and entered Loch Ness. To my astonishment a friendly Gowk at that precise moment, burst into 5 minutes of continuous cuckooing just yards away, like a messenger to proclaim a welcome to "Katy Wran". Although unseen the Cuckoo was christened, there and then by myself 'MacHide of Perdu'.

Looking the length of the loch, the surface disappeared into the sky about, as a guess 2 miles ahead, a lead covered melted graft, one into the other. The chilly north east breeze was bracing and set my blood a-tingle. A setting perfect for Nessie to show itself, grey skies with clouds down over the hills. There have been many

sightings along this stretch to Urquhart Bay six miles ahead. The first sighting of the monster goes back to 565 A.D. But Lugne Mocumin is reckoned to be the first person to have survived a brief encounter with the monster. Stripped to his underclothes he had been swimming after his boat that had drifted off from the water's edge, when the monster spotted him in the water acres. It set upon him with a roar and was about to devour Lugne when Columba who was there at that time, seeing what was about to happen, loudly rebuked it in a language that the monster understood and so terrified was it, that it scuttled away into the deep waters, showing itself every so often in the years since. The Lugne Mocumin adventure more than 1,400 years ago has never been matched by anyone that has been nearer to Nessie.

A heading was made for the ruins of Urquhart Castle, where in the deep waters around about, many people have seen the elusive Loch Ness Monster. Hills rising on both shores reminded me we were sailing along the Caledonian fault, which is of course a demarcation line of a sort, with the Northern Highlands to starboard and the Central Highlands to port and "Katy Wran" like a little floating house. Where one sat back and watched the grandeur of it all while being slowly pushed along to the south west, on this grey but beautiful fresh water loch, linked up like

a necklace to Loch Oich and Loch Lochy and dangling on the end, the precious stone, the brine, with a treasure of islands like emeralds chaste in dew. Where looking close one can see its ever changing pendulum of tides, reflections of coves, bays and anchorages, blue hills, green hills and at times white hills. A wonderland for the enjoyment of anyone who cares to look.

It was time to have a cup of tea, the kettle was soon boiling and my cold hands grasped a welcomed mug of peaty flavoured tea and it was good. 'Machide' the cuckoo let out a call, listening again and sure enough it was thereabouts. We rarely hear these birds in my home area, smiling, I kidded myself, it's surely following me.

Three other craft sighted braved the elements today, all motor vessels. The sloop sailing herself was edging for Fraser country, seemingly at one time the Clan Fraser lived on the south side of the loch and the Grants on the other. A little weight gently applied on the tiller with my upper leg, feeling the life of the sloop as she beared away from Fraser country and sailed towards the Grant's side, until on a heading for the castle in a misty shroud about a mile ahead.

The ruins of Castle Urquhart dominates the small bay on Strone Point, and must have been very impressive when it was all in working order. All Castles have stories, some most terrible, as this Castle or Fort when governed by Alexander de Forbes and defended by his men against Edward 1st of England in 1304. After a long struggle Alexander de Forbes was forced to surrender with his garrison, but the English put every man alive to the sword, after having accepted their surrender. The castle was also badly damaged in 1689 after the Jacobite Rising.

As "Katy Wran" sailed serenely into Urquhart Bay, mooring buoys belonging to a boat hiring company, also, a small private jetty could be seen to starboard. Not wishing to go ashore my fisherman's anchor was lowered into about ten feet of water at the very head of the bay, to port, with ample room and not another craft nearby.

A dandy anchorage sheltered in a convenient snuggerly. Nevertheless, a bearing was taken, should there be need to do a midnight's flitting due to an uncomfortable wind change (or to flee from the monster). The cabin welcomed me with its dryness, warmth and cocoon like cosiness music played and food cooked, all was peace and normal. The evening meal was delicious, the last tasty morsel was in my mouth and almost choked me. All of a sudden there

came a scraping and tapping outside the boat's hull - ! Tap-tap-tap, there it is again! My hair stood on end with fright, tap-tap-tap, Nessie was surely visiting me. Keep calm, I said to myself, not knowing whether to laugh, cry or use the loo. A quick look out of the cabin windows revealed nothing - ! I stumbled into the cockpit and spotted it lurking about the water line. Greatly surprised, for Nessie was dressed overall in white, with two beautiful clear brown eyes and the brightest orange bill. This was the instrument used to do the tapping. My visitor was an indignant mute swan, a handsome and hungry one, that coaxed me into parting with nearly half a loaf.

A beautiful haven this with small fish, probably trout, rising in the calm waters to snatch a fly. Young trees at the break of the bud grew in the shallows like bayeux country. From my seat in the cabin, looking through the open entrance, the hills covered with a strong moving canopy of cotton-wool clouds, the boat gently swinging, showing a different picture every few seconds, the evening became increasingly filled with entertainment. Everything wet and grey outside but there was nothing in my world that was grey, my heart was full of joy and was humbled by the immense size of the hills around about me. This hill was perhaps 1,000 ft or that one 1,500 ft but

having their heads hidden from view, I felt rather than saw the colossal bulk of them. They could have been a mile high. This was the romantic setting as darkness began to show itself.

With wet sails and a following breeze the clouds rolled in from the east, visibility was much better this morning, the full length of the loch could be seen eight miles one way and sixteen miles to Fort Augustus. About here a little south of Drumnadrochit there is a cairn ashore that was erected by the village people hereabouts, as a monument to John Cobb, who in 1952 died in an attempt to smash the world water speed record. The cairn overlooks the measured mile that he used.

The hills were showing their peaks, all except the mountain Mealfuarvanie, 2,284 ft which still had its head hidden up there on this merry day of May, but underneath the cloud many colours and shades of green cheered one's heart. The patchwork with unfading coniferous trees as we passed by was the darkest of all the greens showing up in contrast to the fresh lighter tints of verdancy Spring was treating us to on the hillsides.

Water and view were mine alone, not another boat, bird or bee was there to be seen, it was a good time for a cup of

coffee, the kettle was put on the gas. Then after a minute or two, I removed it and emptied the water over the side, as it dawned on me - ! The sloop was sailing on the best of drinking water, tempting me, to make my coffee with it, having never been in such a unique situation ever before. Armed with a pot, I scooped up enough for a brew and at the same time wondered how old the water would be right down there on the bottom at the Loch bed, for this is the deepest part of the Loch. The chart shows 227 metres at this spot, asking myself all sorts of questions but I had not the answers. How far back in time did the first drop of water trickle into this Valley? Would these first drops still be down there trapped in the depths over the years? Would there be any movement of water at that depth? Are all the rivers and streams supplying the Loch on the surface or could there be subterranean inlets or subterranean outlets? Would there be any way of telling the age of water? Then the kettle whistle interrupted things telling me my drop of the Loch was ready to be made into coffee and my, my, a first class cup it was, although unaware of the vintage, but guessed by the amount of rain there has been it would be less than twenty-four hours old.

We were in deciding distance of Foyers, to go ashore or not to go ashore. The rain made no difference, but the

pier and landing place is very exposed to the north-east. The breeze had been rising slowly, a decision was made not to go in, it wouldn't have been very relaxing either at anchor or bumping against the pier. That's the way of things sometimes, its the elements that dictate what one can do and where one can go with a small craft.

Edging out to the deeper water on my down wind easy sail aware of my good fortune of the following wind, for the notes given to me at Clachnaharry by the British Waterways board, state that when a strong S.W. wind is blowing conditions in Loch Ness are bad, can become extremely rough and unsuitable for a small boat and I could believe that, but today there is time to look, time to think, time to enjoy it and time to thank heaven for being able. There are roads on both shores, the starboard one I would think would be the most picturesque to drive on. The road on the port side seems to disappear a short way past Foyers. It is supposed to follow the line of General Wades road built in 1734. Wade had the reputation of knowing how to build roads, the story goes, that whenever he could, he laid his roads so that an army of the day could not be ambushed while marching along them. He would often build a road a little way up a hillside giving himself much more work, when it would have been easier to put it right down in

the valley. If he was confronted with soft marshy ground he did not try to dig foundations, instead he would have his road builders chopping down young trees and collecting branches to make hundreds of wood faggots. These were laid down and his road floated across the soft ground. Many a road today is floated over marshy ground of rafts, not of wood but of concrete.

Ideas surely do not change over the years but materials do. I would imagine too that over the years there have been many old ideas reborn into the sailing world, one in particular was the Artemon, introduced to the Roman Ships of the second century A.D. This was an idea in the form of a mast set up at 45° from the deck pointing forward high over the bow, something like a Bow-Sprit to which was set a yard and square sail. When in use the sail would balloon out in front of the vessel. This must have improved the performance of their ships. Yet the artemon fell into disuse, more than a 1,000 years elapsed before it was rediscovered and used again. Today, a modification of the same idea is used, we call it a Spinnaker.

The Viking ships which invaded our shores long before the Norman Conquest were beautiful craft, their fine lines easy on the eye and nicely proportioned with a graceful

sheer, were characteristics which were lost to ship design until the Sailing Ship came into being in the Nineteenth Century. Today, some of the features of the Viking Ship still survive amongst many small sailing craft, even to the very construction of them in the most modern boat building materials of today. I could also imagine the many types and variety of craft that have used these waters, from log rafts, cut out logs, reed made boats, animal skins stretched over sapling ribs, wood planked boats, canvas, steel, aluminium, rubber and plywood boats, some with oars, some with sails, some with engines. Beamy boats with baggy sails, some with breast-hooks, Booms and Bowsprits, Clinker, Carvel, with counters, Deadeyes and Crosstrees, Double Enders with Gaffs and Lugsails. Thousands upon thousands of boats floating this way and that. Boats now made with Glass Reinforced Plastic like the Katy Wran with self draining cockpits and keels, arranged to enable a boat to dry out on a tidal beach and yet stand level, with sails made of man made fibres. Yet all the mariners down the ages, wishing to voyage home, or away from it, the urge to wander. An unchanging world in many ways.

Katy Wran was keeping a straight course for Invermoriston where the river Moriston runs into the Loch. I had been thinking about the lack of bird life here today, when

sighting three Terns heading up to the North end of the Loch, fighting the wind to get up to the little islands on Loch Dochfour I wouldn't be surprised, and later one solitary Manx Shearwater, looking like a black Tern flying low just missing the waves and heading in the same direction. There was little shelter at Invermoriston. It looked attractive, on a quiet day it would make a good anchorage for a few hours, to fish for a while. There are Trout and Salmon in the Loch but fishing is allowed by permit only.

The sails of four sailing boats were spotted towards Fort Augustus tacking this way. If they are on passage, it will take them a good six to seven hours of sailing to windward using sails only to get to the other end of the Loch. Invermoriston had Jacobite connections. The Hanovarian troops remember had a lot of trouble from the famous Seven Men from Glenmoriston, also Bonnie Prince Charlie was given refuge here after Culloden. One of his friends Roderick MacKenzie was shot while trying to create a diversion dressed in the Prince's coat, while the Prince moved off in another direction, a good comrade indeed. Over on the starboard side past Portclair Point, MacHide let out three good calls to let me know it was still there.

White horses topped the waves giving good sailing and soon we were running out of Loch, the mainsail was dropped leaving the jib set and pulling, with fenders tied in position. 'Would there be room to round-up before reaching the Fort Augustus swing bridge as the wind was taking us in at some rate?' Many must have wondered this before me.

Remembering that chance only favours the mind that is prepared, a light line was tied to the bucket handle and made the other end fast to the cockpit cleat and left it there ready to throw over the side to act as a break should it be needed, then started the Outboard Motor and took down the jib. The river to starboard, the river Oich could be easily mistaken for the canal, for both the canal and river run parallel and very close together. Passing the lighthouse on our port side and we were in the canal cutting and quiet water, the wind baffled somewhat. With no reverse on the outboard motor it was put out of gear with steerage way enough to take Katy Wran to the jetties on the starboard side. A short distance from the bridge, it was an easy matter to make a rope fast from the cockpit to the jetty and go forward to tie the bow.

With one foot ashore my shadow went before me, the sun had arrived with the afternoon. A lock-keeper dressed neatly in a blue boiler suit met me and asked,

"Are you the only one aboard the 'Katy Wran'?"

"That's right," said I.

He informed me about boat movements, then said,

"Don't go away."

He returned later with a cloth bag like a small pillow-slip.

"That was left for the 'Katy Wran'",

and right enough the boat's name was on it. Before we could talk further, the lock-keeper was called away.

Puzzled, as I don't know a soul about here. Once back in the cabin the bag was opened. Inside was half a bottle of finest Scotch Whisky, a packet of Porridge Oats and a picture postcard of a set of bagpipes. On the back was written

THANKS, IT'S WORKING LIKE A CHARM. MAY ALL YOUR
HORIZONTAL POSITIONS BE AS SNUG AS A TICK IN A TRAMPS
TUCKER BAG. YOURS P&B.

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the cabin the bag was opened. Inside was half a bottle
of finest Scotch Whisky, a packet of Porridge Oats and a
picture postcard of a set of bagpipes. On the back was
written

THANKS, IT'S WORKING LIKE A CHARM. MAY ALL YOUR
HORIZONTAL POSITIONS BE AS SNUG AS A TICK IN A TRAMPS
TUCKER BAG. YOURS P&B.